



**State
Representative
Eric
Pettigrew**

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Committees:

- Economic Development,
Agriculture & Trade
(Vice Chair)
- Children & Family Services
- Housing

February

2006

A Report to the 37th District

Dear Neighbor:

I enjoyed meeting with members of the community during the summer and fall to prepare for the 2006 Legislative session.

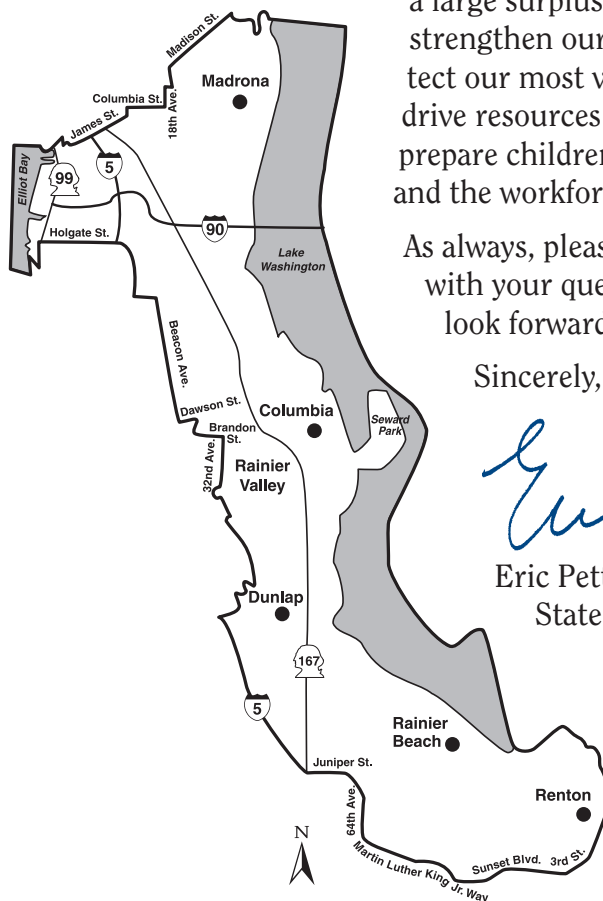
The Legislature has convened in Olympia and I am busy working on your issues. Improving services for children and families, helping students achieve in school and promoting jobs that pay a living wage are my top priorities this session.

All of these issues will require an investment in our state budget. Our state's economic recovery and strong housing market have resulted in a large surplus. I will advocate that we strengthen our social safety net to protect our most vulnerable population and drive resources into our classrooms to prepare children for college, job-training and the workforce.

As always, please feel free to contact me with your questions and concerns. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Eric Pettigrew
State Representative



**37th
District**

State Representative **Eric Pettigrew**

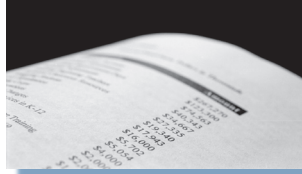
State Budget

Priorities for Washington

The good news about the state budget is that we have a surplus for the first time in many years. However, like a family budget, we must strike a balance between spending and saving for the future.

Governor Christine Gregoire has asked the Legislature to set aside much of the money for future emergencies and rising costs we expect over the next several years. I am pleased that her budget proposal makes the following investments:

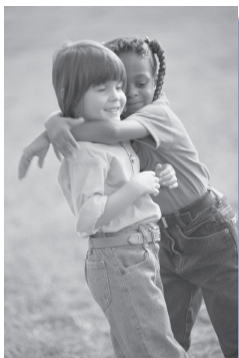
- After-school tutoring, Saturday class and summer school programs to help students pass the Washington Assessment of Student Learning;
- Creation of a Department of Early Learning, which will be in charge of child care and early childhood education programs; and
- Funding for WorkFirst and human services.



Strengthening Children's Services

Improving family child care

Thousands of Washington families depend on safe and reliable child care services to watch over their young ones while parents are at work or school. Many rely on family child care providers – those who regularly care for one or more children in their home or the children's home.



Increasingly, families are having trouble locating affordable, high-quality family child care providers in our state. Low wages and lack of benefits are contributing to the closure of many family child care homes.

I have introduced House Bill 2353 to provide a voice for family child care providers. To maintain qual-

ity family child care, we should allow providers the opportunity to be involved in determining their own wages, hours, rules, and working conditions by extending to them collective bargaining privileges.

The goal of this legislation is to improve the quality and access to family child care services for parents across our state.

Family and Job Security

Protecting the long-term success of families

The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and the WorkFirst programs have helped support many families that are struggling. This year, there are proposals to cut TANF assistance for children if the parents repeatedly fail to look for work. Currently, funding cuts do not affect children so this change in policy could affect hundreds of families. I strongly believe that it is unfair to penalize children and I will work to oppose this proposal.



Building financial security

As the 2006 tax filing season begins, I want to ensure that everyone in our community is aware of the benefits that the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) has brought to thousands of families in our state. The EITC improves the financial situation of individuals without children who earn below \$12,000 and working families with annual incomes below the \$31,000-\$36,000 range, depending on the number of children and marital status.

Fortunately, a growing number of free tax assistance sites in King County provide help in filing taxes to families who qualify for the EITC, are elderly, or who are non-English speaking. These tax sites will make sure that you receive all of the tax credits for which you qualify. The average refund is about \$1,600, and the average refund for a family with children is more than \$2,100.

These sites can also help families setup an Individual Development Account. This is a savings account that low-

A Report to the 37th District



income workers can contribute money that will be matched 3 to 1. The money saved can be used for college or job training, housing, a car, or health insurance. This year, I will work to

secure additional funding for Individual Development Accounts to better help families who are living paycheck-to-paycheck so they can start building wealth.

To locate a free tax preparation site, please visit United Way of King County's site www.uwkc.org/ourcommunity/eitc or call 206-315-8722.

Home heating assistance

The Legislature has taken quick action to assist families and seniors with high heating bills. The Governor signed the bill, which provides funding for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). This means families who qualify for LIHEAP will not have to choose between food on the table or heating their homes this winter.

In the Community

Read Right

Read Right is an innovative reading instruction program that is helping a diverse range of children, including English language learners, teens in special education

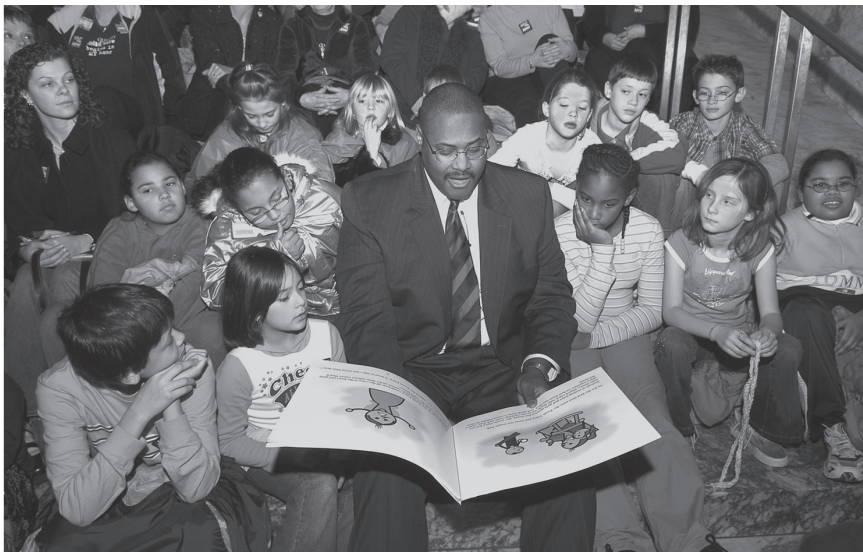
programs and Advanced Placement students. The program incorporates knowledge of brain research and an interactive model of learning to help students become skilled at reading.

The program's ratio of one tutor for every four students has made a difference for students at Garfield and Ballard High School in Seattle. Students have advanced several reading levels and improved their critical reading and comprehension skills. Effective programs like Read Right are especially important as we approach the Washington Assessment of Student Learning graduation requirements in 2008. I hope to raise awareness about Read Right to extend this program and serve more children who are struggling to read.

National 211 Initiative

United Way has partnered with local and state referral agencies to launch the 2-1-1 initiative in our state. The three numbers are easy to remember like 911 emergency services, but instead connect people to important community services and volunteer opportunities. By dialing 211, you can find more information about food banks, shelters, health insurance programs, counseling, job training, childcare and a host of other services.

Washington's 211 service was authorized by the Legislature in 2003 and is expected to be operational soon.



Story time in the Capitol Rotunda

I read a storybook to support children and The Access to Quality Family Child Care Act, HB 2353, which I am sponsoring this session. This bill is important to children and families because we want to provide working parents reliable, affordable and high-quality family child care.

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